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Scale How, Ambleside, UK, 2009

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Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

 Canada

A CENTURY OF EDUCATION.

BY C. L. MAYNARD,

Principal of Westfield College.

THE century, now so soon to close, did not really, as it did nominally, begin in 1801. The Georges were last century kings in every thought and feeling, and the whole country slumbered through their reigns in a last-century condition. But the accession of our gracious Queen marks a new era, and the nineteenth century awoke with a leap and a bound in 1837. Perhaps it is only fair to the preliminary thought, and to the Reform Bill and other changes, to put it a little earlier, but if we say 1820, I am sure that is not a year too late. 1820 is only 80 years ago, yet the difference in thought is more than that of any previous century. Its golden touch has fallen on everything. The system of the Police, the management of the Poor, and of Parliamentary Representation: the Hospitals, the Sanitary Laws, and the whole Science of Medicine, Music, Art, Architecture—everything that surrounds us has come in for its share of reform. On these latter points, how much is owing to the single influence of Ruskin it is hard to estimate, for surely seldom has a man influenced a whole nation in thousands of matters of taste, as he has done! Our very gardens have new flowers, and our furniture new forms. Then again in the year of the Queen's Jubilee there was more shipping in the harbour of Sydney than there was in the Thames in the year of her accession, and this single fact tells a tale of commercial enterprise quite unexampled. In external matters it is the introduction of Steam that effected the chief revolution. For thousands of years our method of transmitting news or transporting ourselves had been at a stand-still, for the muscles of the horse are a constant quantity, and they were the swiftest things known from the siege of Troy to the battle of Waterloo. With this single invention of Steam, the whole world was made smaller and the face of life changed, for prejudices among nations vanish by mixing one with another. The other chief alteration, which is in some sense

dependent on the first, is the power of Literature. At the beginning of the century it was confined to the few, now it is spread over the country as a whole. Look at the force of the daily papers, at the quantity, the good style and the illustrations of the Press: look at the Science and Literature Primers and popular books, where the greatest experts write on the greatest subjects in simplest language: it would extend our half-hour to hours long, to go on saying:—"Look!" at all the divisions of this wonderful and attractive world of Literature, so here we will end.

Amid the immense area of these changes, can we wonder that the education and position of women has altered? Would it not be surprising if it were not so? It is in these non-military changes that we naturally share the most. The conquests of Napoleon may sweep like fire over Europe and leave us where we stood, but when travelling is made easy, and literature made cheap, when Medicine has extended its wings, and true Art has come to our very doors, then we share even more than the men in the happiness of freedom and of a wider view. Times are altered, there is no doubt of that, and we must not complain, and we need not exult, but we will simply take the century as it is put into our hands, and try to guide it and to use its wondrous forces for good. The great ship of the world threads its course through unknown waters to an unseen port, and we are passengers on it and have not the responsibility of its voyage. We have a Pilot who never loosens His hold on the helm, even He who "is before all things, and by whom all things consist." The earth is the Lord's, and He who has guided it these thousands of years will guide it to the end, and the Spirit of Christ can work as really, as potently, and as radiantly in the end of the nineteenth century as it did in the first. We are at no disadvantage there.

But to come to our immediate point, the education of girls. In the early part of the century it was at a level where we may say it had stood for ages, and now it has altered at every point. As in the case of travelling and of literature, education was the privilege of a few, and for those few it was very good indeed, but the many were left outside to a poor and slipshod system, a waste howling wilderness of learning by heart, of shallow accomplishments, of working samplers, and of

trifling chat. For the few it was very good, and almost every woman born before 1810 seems to have had the same materials on which to be educated. Consult those in our hands, the *Life of Baroness Bunsen*, of *Miss F. Kemble*, or *Mrs. Schimmelpenninck*, or indeed any other, and for their books you will find *Plutarch's Lives*, *Rollin's Ancient History*, *Lavater's Physiognomy*, *Bewick's Birds*, and *White's Selborne*, which, with a few more, were really known and loved. We nowadays may be able to supply more suitable materials, but we can in no way better the way that material was handled, or improve on the love, the reverence, the thoroughness, the true appreciation brought to bear on these works. For we have attacked the many, and strive hard to embrace all England in our efforts, and what we have gained in quantity we are in danger of losing in quality. We have an array of splendid books ready to our hands, we have cheap editions of great authors, we have diagrams and primers and lectures so accessible that if wisdom comes through the printed page, there is but the lowest class of all that need go without a good education.

But do we succeed? do we attain? These things, our books and diagrams, are means, not end, and are nothing if they do not produce the right result. The only meaning of education is something that fits us for the work of life, and masses of facts, however accurate, will not do this. Character is worth far more than intellect, and a single book treated with reverence and affection so that the whole nature is drawn out to the subject spoken of, is worth more as an educative medium than a score treated with momentary attention. Generally speaking we have 20 or 25 years in which to *learn* and some 40 or 45 further years in which to *do*, and it is the later of the preparatory years that are of the greatest importance. The seven years from 16 to 23 are the formative years of life, and what we then make ourselves, that we remain. The Grace of God can do anything in the way of transforming both our inner souls and outer conduct, but the methods through which it is shewn, those mysterious things called Character and Cultivation, are fixed by ourselves at this period.

A Christian woman, a lady, whether married or unmarried, is always and almost unconsciously a centre of a great deal

of influence. Fine lines radiate out from her on all sides, both to her equals, and to all those who are in any way lower than herself. The lonely, the sick, and the poor, the servants, the tradespeople, and the dependents of all kinds look to her, and for all she should have a thought and a word of kindly attention, but in the whole area not one division is more blessed or more hopeful to deal with than the Children. There they are!—and I count as "Children" (in the same way that the Law speaks of "Infants") all those who are in the state of *preparing* and not of *doing*,—there they are, a perpetual fresh crop of ignorance and self-will and conceit always coming into the world—there they are, the potential energy and work of the future stored up under the veil of their restless inquisitiveness, or their stolid indifference.

If we turn to the place where St. Paul, writing to Timothy, puts down his list of qualifications for honour in an aged woman, we find he enumerates it thus:—"If she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work." You see how it stands there, first in the row, the highest "Honours" in the Examination List, "If she have brought up children," yet it involves more secular work than any other. Children are very secular. For the first ten years their little bodies are obtrusive, and for the next ten, energy of will or of intellect, not always in useful directions, generally takes its place. There are exceptions, and most lovely exceptions, but as a rule the soul is hidden, and the work of bringing up must go on in faith. "If she have brought up children"; and they need not be your own children or adopted ones either; they may be nephews or nieces, friends' children, school-boys and school-girls you are acquainted with, or members of a class you gather round you. It is well known that those who stand nearest to a wayward child are not always those who have the strongest influence upon it, and a great deal of "bringing up" for God may be compressed into a small number of interviews if there is a mutual understanding established of affection and encouragement. "If she have brought up children"; and though they in their schools may know more than you do with your comparatively old-fashioned education, the relation is not overturned.

A single book read together, talked over, re-read, touched on with respect, applied to daily conduct—a single book, or rather its direct application to the soul of the child, has in it more "bringing up" than a dozen books read hurriedly to itself. You need not be afraid that you cannot retain your superiority, for character is immeasurably superior to knowledge. "If she have brought up children"; remember, finally, that while youth is poor in *expression* it is rich in *impression*, and that if you have touched and held a point of real sympathy with one of these immature souls, you have graven a mark that shall outlive life.

At the beginning of the century, the material we had to work with was scanty, but now it is richer and fuller than a single mind can grasp, and we can only take up a corner of it. But the work we have to do is the same as ever, to enlist these energies and these headlong wills into the humble and faithful service of Christ, to give them true views of life and its proportionate aims, and to teach them to weigh all treasures in "the balance of the sanctuary." The work is as hard as ever, but the opportunities are more splendid than before, for the quicker flies the mind of youth, the more imperative is the need of guidance. You may turn the rudder how you will when the boat is at rest on the lake, but given a strong and active rower, and as you sit there, a turn of a few inches will send it to quite a different destination. The century seems to increase in velocity like a falling stone as it nears its close, and whether we ourselves are young and still in the stage called "preparing," or whether we are older and able to help the generation below us to prepare, we need every effort put forth to win the energy of the world of the future for the "Kingdom of our God and of His Christ."

THE DISCIPLINE AND ORGANIZATION OF THE MIND.*

BY MRS. DOWSON, L.R.C.P. & S. I.

THE immediate purpose of all discipline is the same. It is in every case that process by which in the opinion of those who apply it a given material may be induced to take a certain form and display certain qualities and powers. Whatever our material may be, success depends upon our following its laws. We choose one element to be repressed and another to be encouraged and brought out in form and in function; but if, instead of obeying laws and trying to work with them, we employ as our ordinary method arbitrary dominance and ill-considered force we must always fail in the long run, if not in the short. We fail because the material with which we deal *has* laws of its own, powers and qualities, springs of activity, which we cannot do without if our end is to be attained, and which, in the case of a human being, assert themselves sooner or later in their native independence, frustrating any purpose their owner has not been led on to share.

If we look at the particular instance with which we are concerned to-day—that of the child—we see that much of his intellectual education, if it is worthy of the name, is in fact a double discipline, a discipline of his mental powers and a discipline or organizing of his mental wealth, of the varied items of the knowledge he acquires. The process he goes through is one in which formative, selective, and developing influences are brought to bear both upon him and upon the contents of his mind, in order that we may help him, intelligently and sympathetically, to become what we think best. This is the process of a right educational discipline, but plainly we must some time or other give grave consideration to the end we seek for him. In any treatment of the whole problem we are thrown back on the question of the *final* purpose of the discipline we apply. We have to consider,

* Read before the Hyde Park and Bayswater Branch of the P.N.E.U.